



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

BETHESDA 14, MD.

May 20, 1959

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Mrs. Albert D. Lasker, Chairman
National Health Education Committee, Inc.
135 East Forty-second Street
New York 17, New York

Dear Mrs. Lasker:

I appreciated getting your letter of April the 24th and the accompanying brochure "Do we spend enough dollars to defend our lives through medical research." My colleagues and I read the brochure with great interest, and I want to congratulate you on the excellent presentation of the material.

In looking toward the major challenges that remain I think we must add the whole area of research that has to do with man's relation to his fellow man. The greatest area of future medical research will be in human behavior. The position of mental illnesses becomes obvious when one realizes that more than half of all hospital beds in this country are now filled with mental patients. But in addition this area must include what is encompassed by the bounds of "normal" behavior. I expect that more man hours are lost each year because of strains between the boss and the subordinate than because of the common cold. Both are problems in medical research because only people trained in human biology or medical research in the broad sense can adequately study both problems.

One of our major illnesses in this country today is bad relations between the races. This can be solved in large measure through medical research and after the facts are known in informing the general population of them. I am continually being amazed at the number of people who actually do not know that blood can be safely transfused from colored to white as long as the blood groups match, and at the misconceptions generally held about the inheritance of skin color. Through a more complete knowledge and appreciation of differences between people, racial prejudices could largely be eliminated.

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The greatest disease of mankind is war. World War II was the worst epidemic that ever overcame man and it is impossible to visualize the magnitude of World War III. While the world is spending billions each year to learn how to more effectively wage World War III what is being spent on research on the behavior of man with the aim of preventing World War III? At a recent Nobel prize winners' round table on Science and Mankind excerpts of which were published in the February, 1959, issue of the Unesco Courier, Dr. Gaston Berger of France referred to this area of research as the sciences of man and emphasized that these sciences offer the surest means of solving the world's problems today.

I hope that you in your various capacities of national importance will find time to give these problems some thought. Cancer research is very important and I shall probably spend the rest of my life in this field unless final solution to the problem is reached, but one cannot overlook this urgency for research in human behavior. In your contacts with the general public, with sources of research funds, and with the scientists, I hope that along with your support of research on cancer, heart disease, and the others of the six listed challenges, you will also find time to give support to the recognition of the importance of this additional great challenge.

Sincerely yours,

W. E. Heston

W. E. Heston, Head
General Biology Section
National Cancer Institute